OM

The Immanence of God

ईशा वास्यमिदꣳ सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

Madan Mohan Malaviya

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The Immanence of God

The Vedas are the oldest literary monument of the world. Even European scholars admit that the *Ṛgveda* is at least 4,000 years old and that an older book does not exist in the libraries of the world. The *Ṛgveda* tells us that darkness prevailed everywhere before the creation of this universe. In the midst of that darkness and even beyond it subsisted, all by Himself, one Glorious Being (God), consisting of nothing but intelligence (ज्ञानस्वरूप) and having no origin other than Himself (स्वयम्भू). He evolved Himself out of the darkness and created the universe by dint of His *Tapas*, *i. e.*, His knowledge-power (ज्ञानशक्ति). The *Ṛgveda* says:—

तम आसीत्तमसा गूळ्हमग्रे-
ऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् ।
तुच्छ्येनाभ्यपिहितं यदासीत्
तपसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम् ॥

(8. 7. 17. 3)

This very idea has been echoed by Lord Manu, who says that before its evolution this universe consisted of nothing but darkness. Everything was lying dormant, as it were. Out of that darkness arose that Intelligent (ज्ञानमय), Effulgent (प्रकाशमय)

Being, the Originator of Himself, who does not depend on any other power to reveal Himself and who subsists for ever in His own grandeur (स्वमहिमा) and supports Himself on His own power. The veil of darkness was lifted as soon as He revealed Himself. The actual words of the *Manusmṛti* are quoted below:—

आसीदिदं तमोभूतमप्रज्ञातमलक्षणम् ।
अप्रतर्क्यमविज्ञेयं प्रसुप्तमिव सर्वतः ॥
ततः स्वयम्भूर्भगवानव्यक्तो व्यञ्जयन्निदम् ।
महाभूतादिवृत्तौजाः प्रादुरासीत्तमोनुदः ॥
योऽसावतीन्द्रियग्राह्यः सूक्ष्मोऽव्यक्तः सनातनः ।
सर्वभूतमयोऽचिन्त्यः स एव स्वयमुद्बभौ ॥

(1. 5-7)

"(At the time of universal destruction) this universe had merged, as it were, in darkness. It was in a chaotic condition, indistinguishable, indefinable, inconceivable and incomprehensible: it was lying dormant, as it were. At the end of this period that Glorious Being, who is the originator of Himself, evolved this manifest universe though Himself unmanifest, and, having thus unfolded His creative energy, revealed Himself after lifting the veil of darkness. He who is beyond the ken of the senses, subtle, unmanifest, eternal and incogitable, nay, who is the very soul of all beings, thus shone by Himself."

The *Ṛgveda* further says:—

हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे
भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीत् ।
स दाधार पृथिवीं द्यामुतेमां
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥
य इमा विश्वा भुवनानि जुह्व-
दृषिर्होता न्यसीदत् पिता नः ।
स आशिषा द्रविणमिच्छमानः
प्रथमच्छदवराँ आविवेश ॥
विश्वतश्चक्षुरुत विश्वतोमुखो
विश्वतोबाहुरुत विश्वतस्पात् ।
सं बाहुभ्यां धमति सं पतत्रै-
र्द्यावाभूमी जनयन् देव एकः ॥
यो नः पिता जनिता यो विधाता
धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा ।
यो देवानां नामधा एक एव
तं संप्रश्नं भुवना यन्त्यन्या ॥

There is another Śruti which runs as under:—

आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत् ।
एकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

In The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* the Lord says:—

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद्यत् सदसत्परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥
(*2. 9. 32*)

"At the beginning of creation I alone subsisted, the one beyond the manifest and unmanifest, and nothing else. And it is I alone who survive the creation. This phenomenal world is nothing but Myself, and whatever remains after that is also Myself."

The following verses occur in the *Śiva-Purāṇa*:—

एक एव तदा रुद्रो न द्वितीयोऽस्ति कश्चन।
संसृज्य विश्वं भुवनं गोप्तान्ते संचुकोच सः॥
विश्वतश्चक्षुरेवायमुतायं विश्वतोमुखः।
तथैव विश्वतोबाहुर्विश्वतः पादसंयुतः॥
द्यावाभूमी च जनयन् देव एको महेश्वरः।
स एव सर्वदेवानां प्रभवश्चोद्भवस्तथा॥
अचक्षुरपि यः पश्यत्यकर्णोऽपि शृणोति यः।
सर्वं वेत्ति न वेत्तास्य तमाहुः पुरुषं परम्॥

"At that time it was Rudra alone who existed. It was that Protector of the Universe who first created it and in the end dissolved it. He has eyes all round, faces on all sides, and hands and feet in every direction. Lord Maheśwara is the sole Creator of heaven and earth; He is the undoubted origin and source of all deities. He sees without eyes and hears without ears. He knows all, though no one knows Him. He is known as the Supreme Being."

The *Bhāgavata* further says:-

एकस्त्वमात्मा पुरुषः पुराणः
सत्यः स्वयंज्योतिरनन्त आद्यः ।
नित्योऽक्षरोऽजस्रसुखो निरञ्जनः
पूर्णोऽद्वयो मुक्त उपाधितोऽमृतः ॥
(*10. 14. 23*)

"He alone is the Soul, the Eternal Being, real, self-luminous, infinite, the primordial cause of all, constant, imperishable, always happy, untainted by *Māyā* (illusion), self-sufficient, peerless, unqualified (absolute) and immortal."

This idea, which is common to the Vedas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas, has been succinctly expressed by the immortal saintpoet Goswami Tulasidas in the following verses:—

ब्यापक एक ब्रह्म अबिनासी ।
सत चेतन घन आनँद रासी ॥
आदि अंत कोउ जासु न पावा ।
मति अनुमान निगम जसु गावा ॥
बिनु पद चलै, सुनै बिनु काना ।
कर बिनु करम करै बिधि नाना ॥
आननरहित सकल रस भोगी ।
बिनु बानी बकता बड़ जोगी ॥
तनु बिनु परस, नयन बिनु देखा ।
ग्रहै घ्रान बिनु बास असेखा ॥
अस सब भाँति अलौकिक करनी ।
महिमा तासु जाय किमि बरनी ॥

"*Brahma* (God) is one, all-pervading, imperishable, all-existent, a mass of spirituality and an embodiment of Bliss; no one has been able to find out His beginning or end. Even the Vedas have sung in praise of Him according to their limited capacity. He walks without feet, hears without ears and performs various actions, even though devoid of hands. He relishes all flavours even without a palate, and is a master-orator even though He has got no tongue. He touches without a body, sees without eyes and smells everything without a nose. In this way all His activities are marvellous. How can one describe His greatness ?"

But how are we to believe that such a God exists ?

The Vedas, which affirm the existence of such a God, also say that we cannot perceive Him with our eyes:—

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य
न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्व-
स्ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः ॥

"True, no one can see Him with his eyes: but everyone of us can realize Him with the help of his purified intellect after purging his mind of all evil propensities." Accordingly, those who seek to have a Vision of God with their

mind's eye (intellect) should cleanse their body and mind and purify their intellect, and then commence their search for God.

What do we see?

From the day we are born in this world and till we leave this tabernacle of our body we see grand and wonderful sights which excite a great curiosity in our mind to know how they come into being and how again they disappear. We daily observe that the bright orb of the sun with its wreath of thousand rays appears in the eastern horizon early in the morning and, journeying through the heavens and transmitting light, heat and vitality to the whole world, disappears in the west in the evening. By mathematical calculation the astronomers have arrived at the conclusion that the sun is 9,28,30,000 miles away from the earth. What a wonder that from such a long distance the sun is able to bring light, heat and vitality to all the living beings inhabiting this globe! It sucks up the moisture of this earth during every season through its myriad rays, sends it up to the heavens, and then, transforming it into clouds, discharges it again over the earth and thereby revitalizes the grass, the foliage, the trees and the corn, and infuses new life into all living beings. Astronomy tells us that there are countless millions of suns much larger than the one which we see, but which appear to us like tiny stars

on account of their being remoter than the sun with which we are familiar. Every evening after sunset we see the spacious firmament on high spangled with numberless stars, planets, satellites and other heavenly bodies. The silvery moon with its cool and soothing rays careers through the sky from the east to the west like the sun, immersing the whole world in nectar, as it were, and making the nights appear golden. The bright lustre shed by the various heavenly bodies in dark nights and enveloping all the points of the compass appears so beautiful that one does not find adequate words to describe its charm. All these stars and planets are seen revolving in the sky in fixed orbits from day to day, month to month and year to year under immutable laws, as if strung together in a cord. It is evident that if the sun does not shine brightly in a particular summer we do not have good showers during the following rains. It is equally plain that if the rains fail we cannot have a good harvest of corn and fruits to feed ourselves with. Thus we clearly see that it is the sun who provides us all with food in the shape of corn and fruits. Now, the question arises whether all this organization is the work of some intelligent principle whose object it is to create and sustain all movable and immovable creatures, or is it the result of a fortuitous conjunction of particles of matter only? Has this most marvellous constellation of heavenly bodies (solar system, as it is called) sprung up under

the law of gravitation, which attracts material objects towards one another as a matter of course, and has been revolving in the sky of its own accord from year to year and century to century, nay, from one cycle to another, or is it some intelligent principle which is responsible for bringing it into existence and setting it into motion? It is the latter hypothesis which appeals to our intellect. The Vedas also endorse the verdict of our reason. They declare that the sun and the moon, as also heaven and earth, were created by God:—

सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ धाता यथापूर्वमकल्पयत् ।
दिवं च पृथिवीं चान्तरिक्षमथो स्वः ॥

The Evolution of Life

Similarly, we observe that the evolution of the organic world also proclaims that the creator of this universe is God. This organic world is full of wonders. Mammals (जरायुज) like the man, the lion, the elephant, the horse and the cow; hatched creatures (अण्डज) like birds; lice and other insects bred by sweat (स्वेदज) and refuse of body: and trees, etc., which spring out of the soil (उद्भिज्ज)—the origin (उत्पत्ति), shape (रचना) and career (जीवन) of all these are simply marvellous. When the male and female unite together in love, a very minute yet organic element of the male's body makes its way into the uterus of the female, where it is joined with a similar

element of the female's body. This combination of the male and female elements is known as the *Jiva* (living organism).

The Vedas say:—

वालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च ।
भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्याय कल्पते ॥

"Divide the extreme end of a hair into hundred parts and take the hundredth part of one of these parts: then you can gauge the minuteness of a *Jiva*." This *Jiva* grows in the form of an organism from the moment of its conception. Students of medical science have been able to discover with the help of microscope that a single drop of our seminal fluid contains hundreds of thousands of living germs, and that only one of such germs, finds its way into the uterus where it persists and grows to be a foetus. The organism of a female's body is so constituted as to enable the *Jiva* from the time of conception onwards to draw its nourishment through something which is shaped like a pipe. As the foetus grows in size there forms round it inside the uterus a sort of membraneous bag full of fluid, which protects the foetus from injury. Wherefrom does this minutest and subtlest substance, as nice as the ten-thousandth part of the point of a hair, derive the capacity to assume gradually the features, the complexion and the shape of its parents? What is the

power which sustains it and helps its growth in the mother's womb ? How do you account for the strange phenomenon that milk begins to ooze from the mother's breasts shortly before the child's birth ? What power is there which supports the numberless living creatures, including men, animals and biids, worms and insects, nay, even trees and plants, and provides them with nourishment in time ? What is the power which enables the ant to ascend a steep wall during the day-time as well as at night ? What power enables birds of every size, big and small, to soar high in the limitless expanse of the sky without any guide or support ?

How are innumerable varieties of forms, such as males and females, human beings, cows, lions, elephants, birds and insects, created ? How is it that only human beings are born of human beings, lions of lions, horses of horses, cows of cows, pea-cocks of pea-cocks, swans of swans, parrots of parrots and pigeons of pigeons, a true copy of their parents in every respect. From tiny seeds spring up numberless big and small trees, reared with the help of some unknown power and serve the living creatures for many years with their foliage, flowers, juice, oil, bark and wood, nourish and feed them with hundreds and thousands of their rich, juicy and delicious fruits, breathe the air, suck the moisture and draw their nourishment from the earth and

the atmosphere, and wave and dance majestically in the air.

In our attempt to discover the miraculous power which is managing this whole show we find our attention arrested by a residential building which we see before us. It is found to have a big entrance by which we can enter the house. It also contains a number of windows and ventilators at various points to admit air and light. The interior of the house has many huge pillars and arches. It is also provided with roofs and balconies to protect the inmates from the sun and showers. Every device has been employed to minister to the comfort of the inmates in every room and apartment. Drains have been constructed to allow water to flow out of the house. The house has been so designed as to prove comfortable to the inmates during every season. By seeing this house we can say that the builder of the house was a skilled architect who designed it in such a way as to provide every comfort to the inmates. Although we have not seen the architect who built the house, we feel certain that it was built by one who is either still alive or is no longer in this world, and that it is or was a clever and intelligent man. Now let us examine the machine of our body.

It has got a mouth by which we eat and drink, teeth and jaws with which we masticate

our food and a passage in our throat, known as the alimentary canal, through which we pass the food on to the stomach. Adjoining this there is another passage by which we inhale and exhale. The stomach has got a separate compartment in which the food which we eat is stored and undergoes the process of digestion and assimilation.

The food, when digested, is transformed into blood, which accumulates in the heart, and therefrom it is conveyed through the numerous arteries to all parts of the body and thereby sustains, invigorates, enlivens and rejuvenates the whole frame. The body has further been provided with an outlet for passing the superfluous element of the food, which is not necessary for the nourishment of the body, in the form of excreta and another canal, called urethra, for pumping out the redundant part of milk, water and other fluids that we take, which is not required for the nutrition of the body. We have also been provided with a pair of eyes to see, a pair of ears for hearing, a pair of nostrils to take smell, a pair each of arms and legs with which to work and walk along respectively, and a generative organ for procreation. We now ask whether this most wonderful mechanism has come into being merely as a result of concatenation of particles of matter or whether it has been moulded and fashioned by some architect similar to the one who built the house referred to above, though infinitely more skilful, intelligent and powerful than the latter.

Miraculous Powers of Mind and Speech

As we turn to our mind, while engaged in these thoughts, we find that our mind, too, is a wonderful specimen of divine skill. The diverse faculties of our mind, such as the cogitative faculty, the imaginative faculty, the reckoning faculty, the constructive faculty, the retentive power, the power of understanding and the penetrative faculty are all such as leave us in bewilderment. It is by exercising these faculties that so many books have been written, so many poems have been composed, so many sciences have been discovered, and so many inventions have been made and are still being made. Is it something less amazing ? Our powers of speech and modulation of voice are also marvellous. We find this purposiveness working everywhere in this universe. Moreover, we do not find the beginning or end of this creation. The various limbs of the different species of living beings have been fashioned and assorted in such a symmetrical way that the whole creation appears full of charm. We thus see that ever since the beginning of creation some miraculous power has been at work in every clime and at every age, and that it will continue to work for ever.

Our intellect forces upon us the conclusion that this purposive creation has a primordial (आदि), eternal (सनातन), unborn (अज), imperishable (अविनाशी), and ubiquitous (जगद्व्यापक) efficient cause,

who is endowed with infinite power (अनन्तशक्तिसम्पन्न) and is all-existent, all-intelligent and all-blissful (सत-चित्-आनन्दस्वरूप). That one indescribable power is called by thousands of names such as Īśwara, Parameśwara, Parabrahma, Nārāyaṇa, Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, Śiva, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Jehova, God, Khudā, Allāh, etc.

There is only one God

The Vedas say:—

एकमेवाद्वितीयम् । एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति । एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति ।

"There is only one God, one without a second. That one is called by the wise by various names. Although He is one, people have different notions about Him."

The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and *Śivasahasranāma* afford a striking illustration to this truth. Yudhiṣṭhira asked Grandfather Bhīṣma to name the deity who was one without a second, who was the greatest refuge of all living beings, and whose worship and eulogy brought everlasting happiness to man. To the above query Bhīṣma gave the following reply:—

जगत्प्रभुं देवदेवमनन्तं पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स्तुवन्नामसहस्रेण पुरुषः सततोत्थितः ॥

× × ×

अनादिनिधनं विष्णुं सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
लोकाध्यक्षं स्तुवन्नित्यं सर्वदुःखातिगो भवेत् ॥

× × ×

परमं यो महत्तेजः परमं यो महत्तपः ।
परमं यो महद्ब्रह्म परमं यः परायणम् ॥
पवित्राणां पवित्रं यो मङ्गलानां च मङ्गलम् ।
दैवतं देवतानां च भूतानां योऽव्ययः पिता ॥

"That is to say, every morning, on quitting one's bed, one should extol God Viṣṇu, who is the Lord of the whole universe, the Supreme Deity, the Eternal and Ideal Being (पुरुषोत्तम). One who always eulogizes Him who is the Supreme Lord and Ruler of the whole universe and who is all-pervading, unborn and imperishable, is rid of all troubles. He is the brightest of all effulgent beings and the most austere of all austere penances. He is the greatest of the great and the most hospitable refuge of all creatures. He is the purest of the pure, the most sacro-sanct of all that is sacred, the most auspicious of all that is auspicious, the godliest of all gods and the undying father of all created beings."

The above excerpts should suffice to show that the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and *Śivasahasranāma* and all other laudatory compilations of that type aver that one God and no other is the object of their praise. It therefore behoves us all to

concentrate our minds on, and sing in praise of, Him every morning and evening.

Though one, He is called by three names

This one God is known by the three names of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* says:—

सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तकरणीं ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवाभिधाम् ।
स संज्ञां याति भगवानेक एव जनार्दनः ॥

"Lord Janārdana, though essentially one, assumes the name of Brahmā at the time of creation of this universe, that of Viṣṇu while maintaining it, and that of Śiva while destroying it."

We find the same idea echoed in the *Bṛhannāradīya-Purāṇa*:—

नारायणोऽक्षरोऽनन्तः सर्वव्यापी निरञ्जनः ।
तेनेदमखिलं व्याप्तं जगत् स्थावरजङ्गमम् ॥
तमादिदेवमजरं केचिदाहुः शिवाभिधम् ।
केचिद्विष्णुं सदा सत्यं ब्रह्माणं केचिदूचिरे ॥

"Nārāyaṇa is imperishable, infinite, omnipresent and untainted by *Māyā*. He pervades the whole creation consisting of sentient and insentient beings. That ever young, primeval deity is called by some by the name of Śiva, by others by the name of Viṣṇu, who is always existent, and by still others by the name of Brahmā."

In the *Śiva-Purāṇa* as well Lord Maheśwara says:—

त्रिधा भिन्नो ह्यहं विष्णो ब्रह्मविष्णुहराख्यया ।
सर्गरक्षालयगुणैर्निष्कलोऽयं सदा हरे ॥
अहं भवानयं चैव रुद्रोऽयं यो भविष्यति ।
एकं रूपं न भेदोऽस्ति भेदे च बन्धनं भवेत् ॥

"O Viṣṇu, although in reality I am always undifferentiated, I have to assume three different appellations, *viz.*, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, while discharging the functions of creation, maintenance and dissolution (of the universe) respectively. Yourself, Brahmā, who is with us at present, Myself and Rudra, who is still to come, are all one. There is no difference between us all. Differentiation entails bondage."

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* Śrī Bhagavān says:—

अहं ब्रह्मा च शर्वश्च जगतः कारणं परम् ।
आत्मेश्वर उपद्रष्टा स्वयंदृगविशेषणः ॥
आत्ममायां समाविश्य सोऽहं गुणमयीं द्विज ।
सृजन् रक्षन् हरन् विश्वं दध्रे संज्ञां क्रियोचिताम् ॥

"Brahmā, Śarva (Śiva) and Myself are the ultimate cause of this universe. We are the Universal Soul, the Lord of all, the Spectator, Self-seeing and unqualified. O Brahman, after penetrating My one *Māyā*, which consists of the three Guṇas (attributes), I assume three different

epithets according as I create, maintain or dissolve the universe."

Hence it is a mistake to regard Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva as different from one another. They are the appellations of one and the same God.

The *Śiva-Purāṇa* further says:—

शिवो महेश्वरश्चैव रुद्रो विष्णुः पितामहः ।
संसारवैद्यः सर्वज्ञः परमात्मेति मुख्यतः ॥
नामाष्टकमिदं नित्यं शिवस्य प्रतिपादकम् ।

"Śiva, Maheśwara, Rudra, Viṣṇu, *Pitāmaha* (the Primeval Father), *Saṃsāra-vaidya* (the Healer of the World), *Sarvajña* (Omniscient) and *Paramātmā* (the Supreme Soul), these eight names particularly refer to Lord Śiva."

It is therefore clear that 'ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय,' 'ॐ नमो नारायणाय', 'ॐ नमः शिवाय', 'श्रीरामाय नमः' and 'श्रीकृष्णाय नमः,' all these formulae are salutations of one and the same deity.

What is that God like ?

The Vedas describe Him as 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म'.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata describes Him as under:—

विशुद्धं केवलं ज्ञानं प्रत्यक् सम्यगवस्थितम् ।
सत्यं पूर्णमनाद्यन्तं निर्गुणं नित्यमद्वयम् ॥
ऋषे विदन्ति मुनयः प्रशान्तात्मेन्द्रियाशयाः ।

ज्ञानमात्रं परं ब्रह्म परमात्मेश्वरः पुमान्।
दृश्यादिभिः पृथग्भावैर्भगवानेक ईयते ॥

"God (*Brahma*) is real; He has always existed, exists and shall exist for ever. He is all-knowledge, all-intelligence and all-bliss. Having no separate body, He is enacting this drama of the universe through the various perishable bodies. He is absolutely pure (निर्मल), consisting of nothing but knowledge (ज्ञानस्वरूप) and self-sufficient (पूर्ण). He has no beginning and no end. He is eternal (नित्य) and peerless (अद्वितीय). Though one, He manifests Himself in various forms.

In another context it says:—

"Entering the various bodies as their very self (*Ātmā*), that Eternal Being (पुराणपुरुष), who is self-luminous (स्वयंप्रकाश) and unborn (अज), who is the Supreme Lord (परमेश्वर) and who is known by the names of Nārāyaṇa, Bhagavān and Vāsudeva, is illuminating every form created by Himself by dint of His *Māyā* (enrapturing power)."

The third chapter of *Skandha* 11 of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* contains a full and most illuminating exposition of God (*Brahma*), who is the main theme of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas.

King Janaka addressed the seers thus:—

"O seers, you are the very cream of those who are well-versed in theology. Be pleased to

give me an accurate idea of that Supreme Being (परमात्मा), that Ultimate Reality (परब्रह्म), who is called by the name of Nārāyaṇa."

The sage Pippalāyana gave the following answer:—

"O king ! know that Ultimate Reality to be Nārāyaṇa who is responsible for the creation (सृजन), maintenance (पालन) and destruction (संहार) of this universe, though Himself attributable to no cause; who persists, within as well as without, in all the three stages of dream (स्वप्न), waking life (जागरण) and sound sleep (सुषुप्ति) and who inspires and stirs the body along with its various sense-organs (इन्द्रिय), the respiratory organs (प्राण) and the heart (हृदय) to their respective functions. Just as sparks cannot penetrate the fire, in the same way our mind, speech, eyes, intellect, respiratory organs and sense-organs are incapable of comprehending that Ultimate Principle; nay, they cannot even approach it, much less describe it.

"He was never born and shall never die; He does not grow, nor does He ever diminish in size; He is immune from changes like birth and death, but is only a witness of all changing conditions; He is present everywhere and at every time and shall ever remain so; He is imperishable and consists of Knowledge and Knowledge alone (ज्ञानमात्र). Just as vitality (प्राण) is one, although it functions differently though different organs (for instance, the eyes see, the ears hear

and the nose smells, and so on), and thus appears differentiated, similarly, the *Ātmā* (Spirit), though one, appears as differentiated, because of its manifesting itself through different bodies. God is present everywhere—in the whole creation—alike in mammals such as the human being, the cow, the horse, the elephant, the lion, the dog, the sheep, the goat, etc.; in birds and other hatched creatures; in insects—bred by sweat and refuse of the body, etc., and the vegetable world which springs up from the soil; in short, wherever there is vitality functioning in some form of another. That which is seen abiding in us as a constant witnessing factor even when all our senses lie dormant, nay, when even the 'Ego' as expressed by the words "I am" is merged for the time being, and which we recall to our mind, on our waking, by using such expressions as 'We had a good sleep', 'We saw this dream', and so on, is *Brahma* (God)."

Where is the abode of this God ?

The Śruti says:—

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः
सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः
साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥

(*Śwetāśwataropaniṣad VI. 11*)

"There is only one God who is hidden within us all, nay, who is pervading everything, who is

the inner self of all living beings and is the controller (नियन्ता) of all that is going on in this universe. He is the indweller of all creatures, the disinterested witness of all the activities of the world, the one intelligent principle without a compeer, and untainted by attributes (गुण)."

The Vedas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas are all unanimous in declaring that this Supreme Deity is immanent in fire, in water, in the air, in the whole universe, in all herbs and plants, in all living creatures.

The Śruti says:—

एष देवो विश्वकर्मा महात्मा
सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः।
हृदा हृदिस्थं मनसा य एन-
मेवं विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति॥

"That Supreme Deity, the creator of the universe, always dwells in the hearts of creatures. Those who feel the holy presence of this Great Being in their hearts with their purified minds become immortal."

न तस्य कश्चित्पतिरस्ति लोके
न चेशिता नैव च तस्य लिङ्गम्।
स कारणं करणाधिपाधिपो
न चास्य कश्चिज्जनिता न चाधिपः॥

(*Swetāśwataropaniṣad VI.* 9)

"He owes allegiance to none in this world, nor is He amenable to any one's authority or control. He has no distinguishing mark either. He has no origin, no originator, no protector."

तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं
तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम् ।
पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्ताद्
विदाम देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम् ॥

(*Ibid VI.* 7)

"We have come to know that Paramount Lord of all those who are in power or authority, the Presiding Deity of all the deities, the Master of all masters, the Lord of all the three worlds, the most adorable of all."

Goswami Tulasidas says:—

सोइ सच्चिदानंदघन रामा ।
अज बिग्यानरूप बलधामा ॥
ब्यापक ब्याप्य अखंड अनंता ।
अखिल अमोघसक्ति भगवंता ॥
अगुन अदभ्र गिरागोतीता ।
समदरसी अनवद्य अजीता ॥
निरमल निराकार निरमोहा ।
नित्य निरंजन सुखसंदोहा ॥
प्रकृतिपार प्रभु सब उरबासी ।
ब्रह्म निरीह बिरज अबिनासी ॥

इहाँ मोह कर कारन नाहीं ।
रबिसंमुख तम कबहुँ कि जाहीं ॥

"Verily Rāma is that God who is all-existence, all-intelligence and all-bliss, who is unborn, who has knowledge as His very essence, and is a great reservoir of strength; He is all-pervading and also constitutes that which is pervaded; He is indivisible and infinite; He is the embodiment of all unfailing power and the Lord of all; He is unqualified, vast, unapproachable by speech and other senses, impartial, faultless, invincible, blotless, formless, free from ignorance, eternal and untainted by *Māyā*. He is a mass of happiness; He is beyond the reach of *Prakṛti* (primordial matter), the master, the indweller of every heart, free from desire and attachment, and imperishable. Infatuation cannot prevail over Him. Can darkness ever appear before the sun ?"

The aforementioned God dwells in the heart of every living creature in the form of the Spirit (जीव).

ईस्वर अंस जीव अबिनासी ।
चेतन अमल सहज सुखरासी ॥

The Lord Himself says in the *Gītā*:—

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
(*XVIII. 61*)

"God dwells in the hearts of all living beings, O Arjuna !"

The sage Yājñavalkya has put in a nutshell the viewpoint of the Vedas on this subject as follows:—

"One hundred and forty-four thousand positive (हित) and negative (अहित) arteries branch out from the heart of every human being and are spread through out the body.

"In their midst there is an orb, as luminous as the disc of the moon, and in the core of that orb shines the *Ātmā* (the Spirit), emitting a steady light like that of a lamp. That is the only object worth knowing, as its knowledge frees one from the cycle of birth and death.

"That *Ātmā* is present alike in all forms of life, big and small, from the human being down to the meanest insect, nay, even in trees and plants."

Śrī Vedavyāsa says:—

ज्योतिरात्मनि नान्यत्र समं तत् सर्वजन्तुषु ।
स्वयं च शक्यते द्रष्टुं सुसमाहितचेतसा ॥

"God's light dwells within us; it shines alike in every living being. One can see it with the mind's eye after one has fully composed and steadied the mind."

In *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* the Lord Himself says:—

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

× × ×

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥

(*XIII.* 27, 17)

"Verily he is the seer who sees the Lord installed in the heart of every living being as the only imperishable substance among all perishable things.

"That God, the illuminator of all lights, shining beyond the darkness (of ignorance), having knowledge as his essence, the only knowable substance, that which is grasped through knowledge, and who is kindly disposed towards all, is installed in every heart."

Every human being ought to do homage to that one God who dwells in every heart with unalloyed Devotion. One should love every creature, taking it to be His abode. One should be friendly to every living being.

That paragon of devotees, Prahlāda, says:—

ततो हरौ भगवति भक्तिं कुरुत दानवाः ।
आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र सर्वभूतात्मनीश्वरे ॥
दैतेया यक्षरक्षांसि स्त्रियः शूद्रा व्रजौकसः ।
खगा मृगाः पापजीवाः सन्ति ह्यच्युततां गताः ॥
एतावानेव लोकेऽस्मिन् पुंसः स्वार्थः परः स्मृतः ।
एकान्तभक्तिर्गोविन्दे यत्सर्वत्र तदीक्षणम् ॥

(*Bhāgavata VII, vii. 53—55*)

"Therefore, O Dānavas! be devoted to Śrī Hari, who is the soul and Lord of all living

beings, believing that all our fellow-creatures are as susceptible to pleasure and pain as you are. The Daityas, the Yakṣas, the Rākṣasas, the woman-folk, the Śūdras (the labouring class), the cow-herds living in dairy farms, nay, even beasts and birds and other dammed creatures have indubitably attained salvation through Devotion to Lord Achyuta. To be solely devoted to Śrī Govinda and to feel His presence in all living beings is the *summum bonum* to be attained in this world."

The Bedrock of Sanatana Dharma

भगवान् वासुदेवो हि सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितः ।
एतज्ज्ञानं हि सर्वस्य मूलं धर्मस्य शाश्वतम् ॥

"The knowledge that Śrī Vāsudeva is dwelling in the heart of every living creature is the eternal and abiding principle of Sanātana Dharma." The same truth has been preached by the Lord in *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*:—

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु······। (*IX*. 29)

"I am undifferentiated in all creatures." He further says:—

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥
(*V*. *18*)

"The wise look equally on a learned and cultured Brahman, on the one hand, and a cow

or an elephant or a dog or a pariah (*Chāṇḍāla*) on the other." That is to say, they realized that they are equally susceptible to pleasure and pain. The Lord also says:—

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥
(*VI.* 32)

"Verily he should be regarded as the greatest *Yogī* who looks upon all as equal, on the analogy of his own Self so far as pleasure and pain are concerned."

The sage Vedavyāsa has therefore said:—

श्रूयतां धर्मसर्वस्वं श्रुत्वा चाप्यवधार्यताम् ।
आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि परेषां न समाचरेत् ॥
न तत् परस्य संदध्यात् प्रतिकूलं यदात्मनः ।
एष सामासिको धर्मः कामादन्यः प्रवर्तते ॥

"Know this to be the essence of religion and then practise it: refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself, —what you may resent, if done unto you.

"We should not do unto others what we may resent, if done to ourselves. In short, that is religion; all other creeds have some selfish motive behind them."

जीवितुं यः स्वयं चेच्छेत् कथं सोऽन्यं प्रघातयेत् ।
यद्यदात्मनि चेच्छेत तत् परस्यापि चिन्तयेत् ॥

"How can he who wants to survive dare take the life of others? One should always design such things for others as one may choose for one's own self."

The virtues of harmlessness (अहिंसा), truthfulness (सत्य), and refraining from wrongful possession of a thing (अस्तेय)—the practice of all of which has been enjoined upon every human being and the neglect of which is sure to lead to one's downfall,—take their stand on the above doctrine. It is in pursuance of these tenets that the performance of the five great sacrifices (पञ्चमहायज्ञ) has been enjoined upon us by the Vedas in atonement for the sin accruing from the unintentional taking of any life. Carnivorous animals, such human beings as may be bent upon taking our life or that of any other innocent person or robbing him of his property or outraging his religious susceptibilities, those who assault us or invade our country or village, and those who practise incendiarism or administer poison to others have been characterized as outrageous persons (आततायी). It has been made obligatory on us to kill such persons or creatures by way of self-defence, when necessary, with a view to protecting the person, property, faith or honour of a brother or sister of ours. It is, however, a sin to kill innocent and harmless creatures.

It is in pursuance of the above doctrine that Hindus have from the Vedic period down

to the present day maintained an attitude of sympathy towards all innocent creatures of the world. The cow is adored by the Hindus as a mother (लोकमाता) in recognition of the fact that she supplies wholesome milk to the human race and benefits them in so many other ways. It is, therefore, specially incumbent on every human being to preserve this useful animal. Even ordinarily it is forbidden (अकार्य) according to the fundamental doctrine of the above religion to take the life of any innocent and harmless creature, to rob anyone of his or her life and property, to wrong anyone, or to practise fraud upon anyone. On the other hand, to render some service or to do some good turn to one's fellow-beings, who are as susceptible to pleasure and pain as one's own self, constitutes a creed which is true for all times and all climes.

It is in consonance with the above fundamental doctrine that it has been enjoined upon the followers of the Vedic Religion to feed not only human beings but even birds, beasts and all other creatures through the ritual known as 'बलिवैश्वदेव', as will be clear from the verses quoted below:—

ततोऽन्यदन्नमादाय भूमिभागे शुचौ पुनः ।
दद्यादशेषभूतेभ्यः स्वेच्छया तत् समाहितः ॥

देवा मनुष्याः पशवो वयांसि
सिद्धाः सयक्षोरगभूतसङ्घाः ।

प्रेताः पिशाचास्तरवः समस्ता
ये चान्नमिच्छन्ति मया प्रदत्तम् ॥
पिपीलिकाः कीटपतङ्गकाद्या
बुभुक्षिताः कर्मनिबन्धबद्धाः ।
प्रयान्तु ते तृप्तिमिदं मयान्नं
तेभ्यो विसृष्टं सुखिनो भवन्तु ॥
भूतानि सर्वाणि तथान्नमेत-
दहं च विष्णुर्न ततोऽन्यदस्ति ।
तस्मादहं भूतनिकायभूत-
मन्नं प्रयच्छामि भवाय तेषाम् ॥
चतुर्दशो भूतगणो य एष
तत्र स्थिता येऽखिलभूतसङ्घाः ।
तृप्त्यर्थमन्नं हि मया विसृष्टं
तेषामिदं ते मुदिता भवन्तु ॥

इत्युच्चार्य नरो दद्यादन्नं श्रद्धासमन्वितम् ।
भुवि भूतोपकाराय गृही सर्वाश्रयो यतः ॥

"After performing other Yajñas (sacrifices) a householder should take some more food, as much as he may like to have, and, placing it on clean ground, offer it with a peaceful mind to all creatures with the following words:—"May this food, which I have set apart on this occasion, serve to appease and gratify gods, human beings, animals, birds, Siddhas, Yakṣas, Nāgas and other beings, reptiles, evil spirits (प्रेत) and genii (पिशाच), trees, ants, insects, moths and other creatures, whoever

may be starving in consequence of their past actions and may want food from me. All the above-named creatures, the food which is lying here and my own self are none else than Viṣṇu; there is nothing apart from Him. That is why I offer this food, which constitutes the body of the various creatures, for the sake of preserving them."

The householder should then devoutly leave the food on the ground for the good of all creatures, as he is the mainstay of all. Again, in pursuance of the above doctrine, the followers of Sanātana Dharma, while performing the ritual known as *Tarpaṇa* everyday, appease not only their forefathers but the living beings of the whole universe, as will be evident from the following verses:—

देवासुरास्तथा यक्षा नागा गन्धर्वराक्षसाः ।
पिशाचा गुह्यकाः सिद्धाः कूष्माण्डास्तरवः खगाः ॥
जलेचरा भूनिलया वाय्वाधाराश्च जन्तवः ।
प्रीतिमेते प्रयान्त्वाशु मद्दत्तेनाम्बुनाखिलाः ॥
नरकेषु समस्तेषु यातनासु च ये स्थिताः ।
तेषामाप्यायनायैतद्दीयते सलिलं मया ॥
येऽबान्धवा बान्धवा वा येऽन्यजन्मनि बान्धवाः ।
ते सर्वे तृप्तिमायान्तु ये चास्मत्तोयकाङ्क्षिणः ॥

"The Devas, the Daityas, the Yakṣas, the Nāgas, the Gandharvas, the Rākṣasas, the Piśāchas, the Guhyakas, the Siddhas, the Kūṣmāṇḍas, plants, birds, aquatic creatures, burrowing animals, creatures flying in the air, all may be appeased with the

water offered by me. I offer this water with a view to alleviating the sufferings of those who are undergoing tortures in the various infernal regions. I offer this water to appease those who have been connected with me by ties of blood or not or those who may have borne kinship with me in any previous life or those who may be expecting an offering of water from me."

The quantity of food that remains after allotting the share of crows and dogs is too inadequate to appease all other creatures (सर्वभूतेभ्यः). Notwithstanding this, it has been made obligatory on every householder to perform this ritual (बलिवैश्वदेव) because it symbolizes the sacred and lofty idea that a human being stands in the relation of a brother to all his fellow-creatures, and further serves the high and laudable object of surcharging the atmosphere of the world with the idea of fellowship of all living beings under the fatherhood of God and nourishing the idea with the moisture of love like drops of tears.

One cannot adequately praise the catholicity of this faith, which will also be evident from the following benedictory verse coming from the pen of one of the foremost and universally adored exponents of this faith, the great seer Vedavyāsa, who personified in himself the golden maxim 'सर्वभूतहिते रतः' (One should always be devoted to doing good to others):—

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥

"May all living beings be hale and hearty; may all see happy days; let no one be miserable."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the life and soul of Sanātana Dharma, has extended a loving invitation to the whole human race in the following inspiring and reassuring words:—

"Leaving all other creeds alone, take refuge in Me. I shall absolve thee from all sins. Do not worry."

The Lord further says:—

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥
अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥
मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

"I am the same for all livings. I bear no ill-will against any, nor do I love anyone. Those who devoutly worship Me abide in Me, and I abide in them. Even the worst sinner, who solely depends on Me, should be regarded as virtuous; he will in no time be transformed into a saint

and is sure to attain abiding peace. O Arjuna! take it from Me that harm shall never befall him who is devoted to Me. O son of Kuntī! even the womanfolk, the Vaiśyas (those belonging to the trading class), the Śūdras (those belonging to the labouring class) and those of sinful birth will surely attain the highest position if they take refuge in Me."

Blessed are they who have been initiated into this sacred and philanthropic creed! My devout prayer is that, guided by this divine light, all religious-minded persons, after refining and solidifying their knowledge and replenishing the store of their vigour and zeal, may propagate the truths underlying this creed and convince the whole world that God is one and only one, that in His essence He is present not only in all human beings but in all other animals, and plants,—in other words, in human beings, beasts, birds and insects, moths, trees and plants alike, and that the best mode of worshipping Him is to feel the divine presence in all creatures, to be friendly with all and to wish all well. Let us all consolidate and propagate the divine energy by preaching the cult of universal love and diffusing this true knowledge. Let us drive ignorance out of this world, eliminate wrong and injustice and promote mutual good-will, happiness and peace among men by preaching truthfulness, righteousness and compassion.





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